

INTRODUCTION

Historical Development

In 1765, Robert Cochran, hoping to intercept some of the trade coming from the west, located his mill on Cross Creek about a mile from the established settlement at Campbellton. Trade flourished, and soon most of the other merchants had moved to the "upper town" as the site was then called. It was the major locus of business activity when, in 1783, Campbellton and the "upper town" of Cross Creek were chartered as Fayetteville. For almost two centuries the business life of Fayetteville has been centered at this location.

From its earliest days, commerce has been the dominant economic activity in Fayetteville. Being the farthest inland location with access to navigable water, the community had a unique transportation advantage within its region and rapidly developed as a major trade center. This dominant position was further enhanced in the mid-1800's when the town became the focal point for a system of "plank roads." The first and longest of these roads was the Fayetteville and Western, incorporated in 1849 and completed in 1854. For several years it served as a major link in the commercial artery from Bethania (129 miles distant) and Salem in the Piedmont region to the head of navigation at Fayetteville and thence to the port at Wilmington. During the first century of its existence, then, Fayetteville maintained a dominant position in an extensive trade area.

This strong regional position, however, was not destined to continue. Two major events contributed to its decline: one was the Civil War, the other the advent of rail transportation. Sherman's invasion of Fayetteville in 1865 destroyed most of the town's business establishments and left its residents impoverished. About the same time, the railroad became a major mode of transportation, but the early lines by-passed Fayetteville and intercepted in other areas trade that might have returned to Fayetteville after the War. Combined, these two events contributed significantly to the decline of Fayetteville's position as one of the dominant trade centers in the state and region.

In the late 1880's, local commercial activity began to get back on its feet when the Atlantic Coast Line provided the city with rail service. And in 1918,